

# Drug Wars, Counterinsurgency, and the National Guard

Major Reyes Z. Cole, California Army National Guard

**T**HE UNITED STATES is engaged in two wars: the war on drugs and the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). These conflicts have stretched U.S. special operation forces (SOF) thin. Many units are in their third overseas deployment in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom.

I recently deployed to Iraq, where I was assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force—Arabian Peninsula. There, I witnessed firsthand how skills learned during domestic counterdrug missions could directly affect the success of counterinsurgency operations. My 8 years of U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) counterdrug experience proved helpful in solving some of the problems conventional forces faced. Observing how frequently counterdrug skills resembled the skills of SOF soldiers, I wondered how to leverage the National Guard Counterdrug Support Program's (NGCDSP's) uniqueness to help support overburdened SOF and combatant commanders.

## Prelude

The NGCDSP, which has supported the war on drugs since 1989, has vital experience that the United States should harness in Iraq, Afghanistan, and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations around the world. Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, defines an insurgency as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. It is a protracted political military struggle designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control.”<sup>1</sup> Although the drug war is not an insurgency, insurgencies are often funded by drug sales. One only has to look at the Revolu-

tionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan to see this.

Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22 also states: “Fundamental to all counterinsurgencies is the need to help local authorities establish safety, security, and stability, because insurgents thrive on chaos and instability.”<sup>2</sup> The NGCDSP is postured to take the next step in support of overseas national security objectives. Clearly, the NGCDSP's years of vital civil-military counterdrug experience should be used to augment overburdened SOF and combatant commanders.

## DOD and ARNG Involvement

The 1989 National Defense Authorization Act identifies drugs as a clear and present threat to U.S. security and designates the Department of Defense (DOD) as the lead agency to detect and monitor illegal drug shipments into the country; to integrate certain command, control, and technical intelligence assets to ensure they are dedicated to drug interdiction; and to approve and fund state plans for using ARNG soldiers and Air National Guard (ANG) airmen to support law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The NGCDSP, a pure joint program, uses ANG and ARNG personnel in full-time counterdrug status to conduct full-spectrum campaigns in support of law-enforcement operations and government and community-based organizations at all levels. Part of its mission is to anticipate, prevent, deter, and defeat narcotic threats. To accomplish this mission, the NGCDSP provides—

- Program-management coordination and liaison with supported LEAs and CBOs to effectively manage military personnel and equipment and civil support operations.

- Technical support by linguist-translators, intelligence analysts, communications support, engineers, and subsurface divers.

- General support to LEAs for domestic marijuana eradication, including but not limited to aerial, logistic, communications, intelligence, planning, medical, security, transportation, herbicide spraying, and operational planning support.<sup>3</sup>

- Counterdrug-related training to LEAs and military personnel in military subjects and skills used while conducting counterdrug operations or while using military equipment during counterdrug operations.

- Reconnaissance and observation ground teams to perform area observation to detect and report illegal drug activities that include but are not limited to marijuana cultivation; suspected or isolated drug trafficking; airstrips; drug drop zones; drug-trafficking corridors; illegal drug laboratories; and suspicious aircraft, water craft, or motor vehicles. Ground reconnaissance teams use a combination of visual methods by mobile teams, unattended sensors, and ground surveillance radar. ARNG reconnaissance and aerial interdiction (RAID) uses specially modified OH-58 helicopters. The ARNG uses RC-26B, HH-60, and C-130 aircraft to conduct aerial reconnaissance using a combination of visual air-to-ground techniques, thermal imaging, unmanned aerial vehicles, and photography.

- Drug demand reduction support to provide training and education to CBOs, including mentoring and role-model programs, and training to empower local leaders and communities so they can work with local governments to stem the consequences of illegal drug use.<sup>4</sup>

The NGCDSP also owns and operates specialized equipment located throughout the United States that is dedicated to supporting drug law enforcement. This equipment provides enhanced reconnaissance abilities and drug-detection capabilities. Equipment that could be of value in COIN operations includes—

- Counterdrug RC-26B fixed-wing reconnaissance aircraft equipped with infrared thermal-imaging systems, TV spotter scopes, moving map displays, digital and wet-film cameras, and Global Wulfsburg radios capable of providing multiband command and control communications.

- Counterdrug RAID OH-58 helicopters, which can be flown while using night-vision goggles and are equipped with infrared sensors, TV cameras, Wulfsburg radios, Global Positioning Systems, and 30-million-candlepower searchlights.

- Light armored vehicles (LAVs), which are

8-wheeled vehicles that can hold 8 to 12 people, are equipped with a variety of radios, and are used primarily as mobile command centers for tactical operational control but can also be used as transport/cover vehicles.

- Mobile vehicle inspection systems, which are self-contained inspection systems that use low-energy X-ray and Gamma-ray imaging to identify anomalies that might indicate concealed cargo, narcotics, or explosives in a targeted object.

The NGCDSP also has an extensive federal program that uses ARNG personnel and assets in a Title 10 (Armed Forces) status to augment and support U.S. Combatant Command in aerial reconnaissance, signal intelligence, and radar employment (although ARNG Special Forces (SF) units have also been used and other ground forces are being considered).

## **A Great Fit**

Counterdrug and counterinsurgency operations strive for the same end state, rely heavily on the use of counterinsurgency doctrine to be effective, and are examples of fourth-generation warfare—low-intensity asymmetric warfare conducted by groups (rather than by nations or states) who seek major reallocations of power or the overthrow of social systems.<sup>5</sup> Fourth-generation warfare strategies are most visible when viewed through the elements of national power: diplomatic, informational, military and economic (DIME). In fourth-generation warfare, the military element is not DIME's decisive arm; rather, power rests with a balance between economic, diplomatic, and informational elements. In Iraq, even the strongest, most advanced military in the world does not deter insurgent recruitment. In America, the best and largest LEAs have not been able to deter or defeat drug gangs, international cartels, or criminal enterprises. By attacking population groups instead of the military or LEAs, insurgents and drug cartels preserve their infrastructure, avoid devastating head-on firefights, and maintain the ability to spin information to obtain their goals.

Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22 states: "Counterinsurgency is those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency (JP 1-02). It is an offensive approach involving all elements of national power. It supports and influences the host nation's internal defense and development program."<sup>6</sup> Assistance and development programs are the preferred methods of providing support. Counterinsurgency operations usually provide

## Drug wars and counterinsurgency operations goals.

Drug Wars	End State of Success	Insurgencies
	<b><i>Military Goals<sup>1</sup></i></b>	
√	Protect the population	√
√	Establish local political institutions	√
	Reinforce local governments	√
√	Eliminate insurgent capability	√
√	Exploit information from local sources	√
	<b><i>National Drug Control Policy Goals<sup>2</sup></i></b>	
√	Education and community action	√
√	Getting treatment resources where needed	
√	Attack the economic basis of the drug trade	√

1. U.S. Army Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], October 2004), viii.

2. The White House, *National Drug Control Strategy* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2004), 11, 19, 31.

three levels of support:

1. Indirect support, which stresses host-nation and local government self-sufficiency to strengthen governmental infrastructures through economic and military capabilities.

2. Direct support not involving combat operations, which provides U.S. support directly to civilians or their military, including civil-military operations.

3. Direct support involving combat operations, which deploys combat forces against insurgents temporarily until host nations provide their own security.

Overseas, only the president can order direct combat support, whereas he would have to invoke the Insurrection Act to deploy Title 10 forces domestically. Within states, governors have the authority to mobilize Title 32 (National Guard) military members to quell domestic disturbances. Clearly, the strategic goals of counterinsurgency operations and those of the drug war are largely the same.

Through its support to domestic LEAs and CBOs, the Army National Guard has learned how to operate outside a traditional warfighting role, making the NGCDSP a key player as DOD shifts from quick, decisive maneuver warfare to fourth-generation warfare and supporting counterinsurgency operations. What makes National Guard counterdrug personnel so valuable to COIN is their specialized training, their years of practical field experience in conducting military assistance to civil authorities (MACA), and their

joint, interagency, problem-solving mindset.

**Specialized training.** In addition to meeting all military and professional education requirements, NGCDSP personnel are as well trained in warfighting as their full-time counterparts. They also receive specialized training not available to standing conventional forces, such as advanced shooting, defensive tactics, motorcade operations, narco-terrorism personal protection, interview and interrogation, coalition development, photo/video surveillance, and criminal street-gang investigations.

**Practical field experience.** NGCDSP personnel have years of practical experience in MACA and full-spectrum operations. The missions and situations they face daily provide valuable knowledge and skills that are difficult to replicate. Only SF Training Exercise Robin Sage comes close to depicting the difficulties encountered in trying to apply these unconventional warfare techniques. In Robin Sage, SF soldiers must reconcile the desires of rebel commanders, competing underground rebel cells, community leaders, and the uncommitted population.<sup>7</sup>

**Joint, interagency problem-solving mindset.** As a fully joint program, the NGCDSP must be able to solve problems related to both Air Force and Army issues. Daily support from LEAs has taught NGCDSP personnel to immediately analyze situations to determine how military support will affect all other civilian or governmental organizations. This new ability is a significant asset at the program-management level and one closely related to maintaining fledgling coalitions.

## Where To Go From Here

The NGCDSP can support COIN operations overseas, and it possesses the necessary conventional and unconventional skills to combat insurgencies, particularly in countries such as Afghanistan that engage in significant opium production. On the word go, the traditional minutemen of our Nation can begin supporting overseas COIN operations, with emphasis on matters related to coca and poppy cultivation. The NGCDSP can provide a modular, Title 10 force package with critical skills and equipment. We should create a Title 10 battalion-size joint task force to use NGCDSP skills in an overseas COIN role.<sup>8</sup> But who would control the force? How would it be staffed, knowing the states are already short of personnel because of deployments? And how would such a venture be paid for?

The new battalion would be a purely joint military entity, created by a joint manning document and assigned for administrative and logistical support to a combined joint special operations task force. For mission execution, it would be attached to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, to accomplish its overseas narcotics-control mission.

Standing up this force with the least negative effect on the states is critical. By taking only a few members (by specialty) from each of the 54 states and territories, the battalion could quickly attain a workable strength of 360 soldiers and airmen. The task force could be equipped by allocating key counterdrug program materiel already in the inventory. Equipment such as LAVs, surveillance

technologies, and reconnaissance aircraft would be vital to successfully accomplish the task force mission.

The task force could deploy quickly under the Contingency Operation Temporary Tour of Active Duty (COTTAD) statute. COTTAD tours are limited to 179 days or less, making them consistent with many SOF tour lengths. Premobilization time could be minimized (but not shortchanged) using replacement centers at Fort Bliss, Texas, or Fort Benning, Georgia. In Afghanistan, initial funding could come from the recently requested \$257 million addition to the existing \$15.4 million budget.<sup>9</sup> In other U.S. Central Command areas of responsibility (AORs), GWOT funds could be used, and in the U.S. Southern Command AOR, Andean Counterdrug Initiative funds could be tapped.<sup>10</sup>

## The Decisive Step Forward

Today the National Guard Bureau Domestic Operations J3 Counterdrug Program consists of approximately 2,500 soldiers and airmen performing counterdrug duties in a full-time Title 32 status throughout the 54 states and territories. This includes more than 110 linguists and more than 750 people performing intelligence analysis and case-support duties; 162 highly skilled coalition-development facilitators; and over 150 ground reconnaissance specialists, many in an armed status. NGCDSP personnel have a long history of joint and interagency operations. They stand ready to support SOF in counterinsurgency operations around the world.**MR**

## NOTES

1. U.S. Army Field Manual-Interim (FMI) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], October 2004), 1-1.

2. *Ibid.*, iv.

3. Manual eradication, or "whack and stack," is no longer a valid mission set for the NGCDSP.

4. U.S. Army National Guard Regulation 500-2, *National Guard Counterdrug Support* (Washington DC: GPO, March 2000), 8.

5. Global Guerrillas, *4GW-Fourth Generation Warfare*, posted on-line by Jon Robb, 8 May 2004, at <[http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/05/4gw\\_fourth\\_gene.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/05/4gw_fourth_gene.html)>, accessed 27 October 2005.

6. FMI 3-07.22, vi. (See also Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* [Washington, DC: GPO, 1994].)

7. Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 28.

8. The new battalion-size task force would consist of a reconnaissance and security company (supported by National Guard Bureau [NGB] mission 5); civil affairs company (supported by NGB mission 4); and a headquarters company of five specialty platoons: intelligence analysis, language and translation, communications, engineers, and subsurface divers (supported by NGB mission 2). Battalion leaders would provide operational planning support and coordination with host-nation law enforcement agencies and governmental organizations (supported by mission 1).

9. Thom Shanker, "Pentagon To Aid Afghan War On Drugs," *New York Times*, March 2005, and *Contra Costa Times*, 25 March 2005.

10. *Ibid.*

*Major Reyes Z. Cole, California National Guard, is assigned to the National Guard Bureau J3-Counterdrug Division. He received a B.A. from California State University, Bakersfield, and has served in various command and staff positions in the continental United States, with Special Forces units, and with the Combined Joint Special Operations-Arabian Peninsula.*